

# USHUAIA, TIERRA DEL FUEGO 2004

Numismatic News, August 12, 2003: “**Museum on wish list.** Token collector Dick Hanscom of Fairbanks, Alaska, said he hopes to visit the Museo del Fin del Mundo - “Museum at the End of the World” - but for now has settled for discussing it in the June issue.....”

When I did the short article about the tokens and medals from Museo del Fin del Mundo, little did I expect to be visiting there 7 months later.

Our daughter Rocki is currently an exchange student in Chile. One of the things she wanted to do, but would not be able to, was to visit Easter Island. Jan (my wife) and I decided we would make that happen, and join her on the trip. With as little as 40,000 Alaska Airlines miles, you can fly from Fairbanks to Santiago, Chile. So, we planned our trip, and along with Easter Island, we also planned to visit San Pedro de Atacama and Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. The rest of the trip is beyond the scope of this newsletter, however, I would like to report on our trip to the most southerly city on earth.

In reality, the museum was not the draw. That was just a bonus. The draw was to go as far south as we could and stay in the civilized world. In fact, we could have gone a bit further south, across the Beagle Channel to Puerto Williams, Chile, a small town that is primarily a naval base, but I had business to tend to in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina.

Ushuaia is a city of about 50,000 on the north shore of the Beagle Channel. It reminded us very much of our state capital, Juneau. Both are on the water, with a main street along the water, and side streets running up hill. The primary business street, San Martin, is a block uphill from the waterfront. Ushuaia is a tourist town (as is Juneau), being the point of embarkation for many Antarctic cruises.

The first order of business was to deliver a collection box from the South American Missionary Society to Museo del Fin del Mundo. The box represents the first European house in Tierra del Fuego. It is shaped like a house with a peaked roof. The front has two windows and a door. The roof on this side of the house has “South American/Missionary Society.” The left end (as you look at the door) has “Bishop Stirling/Residence/at Ushuaia.” The right end has “First/European Habitation/In/Tierra del Fuego.” The back wall has “Offices/20, John Street/Bedford Row, London, W.C.” Finally, the other side of the roof has the biblical quotation “A light that shineth/in a dark place./ II Peter 1-19.” The bottom has a hinged flap, and evidence of several lay-



## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

This issue should come as no surprise to many. Those who paid their subscription before we left received a post card from Museo del Fin del Mundo. OK, so it was mailed from Fairbanks when we got home. To mail it from Ushuaia would have been 4 Pesos, about \$1.35. With about 60 to mail, I got cheap!

This answers the question "How far can you go on 50,000 Alaska Airlines mile?" The side trips are not included in this, but it will take you to Chile. And, if we had done it right, it could have taken us to Easter Island or Punta Arenas, and saved the cost of those flights.

This trip was really great. Easter Island was AWE-SOME. My attitude before getting there was "seen one stone head, seen them all." Well, I don't take many photos, but I shot 4 rolls on Easter Island. It was neat. If I had to recommend one trip to someone before they died, this would be it.

San Pedro de Atacama in the high desert was like visiting the moon (and sometimes as hard to breath, as we were up to about 4,400 meters). But amid all this barrenness were villages in deep river valleys, green and flourishing. And the cat fight in the courtyard of our hostel at 1AM was hysterical, with the cats bouncing off our door. Especially since we had to be up a 4AM for a tour. That morning tour was in stark contrast to the others we took, with the temperature at about 25°F. OK, so we were at 4,400 meters and the sun had not come up yet. Otherwise, during the day it was in the high 90s.

I think I covered Ushuaia someplace else in this newsletter.

The people in Chile and Ushuaia, Argentina could not have been kinder to the "stupid Americans" that didn't speak Spanish. We were able to communicate in most situations. And if you were a cute waitress working on your English, your tip was a bit better!

Meeting people that I had known via email was the highlight of the whole trip. Their kindnesses and courtesies will not be forgotten and we can only hope that one day we can repay them when they visit Alaska.

It was even pleasant meeting the dealer in Santiago that owed me \$200 or 4 tokens for over six months- I got my money back. He could only find 3 of the 4 tokens, and these are in the PR column. No bidders. Bummer!

And if you want to make a lot of money, smuggle in Chilean toilets. Those babies really flush. No low water volume toilets here!

## PRICES REALIZED

Selected prices realized from eBay:

<b>Barrow</b> , Tony's, 10¢, B-1b	9.99OB
<b>Cordova</b> , Cordova House, 5¢, B-14a	50.99
<b>Cordova</b> , Hegg, 5¢, B-17a	460.00
<b>Fairbanks</b> , Billiken Lounge \$1	OB5.00NB
<b>Hawk Inlet</b> , Harris, B-1c	135.00
<b>Hoonah</b> , Icy Straits, \$1, B-2d	35.00OB
<b>Juneau</b> , Elks, 12½¢, B-19b, holed	OB9.99NB
<b>Juneau</b> , Occ. Hotel, 12½¢, B-56b	OB60.00NB
<b>Juneau</b> , SF Bakery, 1 Loaf, B-65a	15.00OB
<b>Katalla</b> , Johnston & Jensen, 6¼¢, B-3b	890.00
<b>Ketchikan</b> , The Mint, 12½¢, B-33a	30.97
<b>Ketchikan</b> , Scougs, 50¢, B-56c	7.00OB
<b>Ketchikan</b> , Steadman, 12½¢, B-60aI	16.50
<b>Koyukuk</b> , Verneti, 12½¢, B-3a	18.68
<b>McCarthy</b> , Golden Hotel, 12½¢, B-2a	25.00OB
<b>NAT&amp;T</b> , brass tag, B-C9a	132.62
<b>Seward</b> , Palace, 12½¢, B-9c	22.50
<b>Skagway</b> , M&E, 50¢, B-16d	23.50
<b>Dawson</b> , Yukon K&L, Y2550a	49.99OBRNM
<b>Dawson</b> , Yukon K&L, Y2550a	RL49.99OBRNM
<b>Whitehorse</b> , Yukon, TDP 25,50¢,\$1	31.25
<b>Whitehorse</b> , Yukon, TDP \$10 Y8800e	103.51
<b>Whitehorse</b> , Yukon, TDP \$20 Y8800f	103.51
<b>AYPE</b> Encased Cent, round	42.41
<b>Tierra del Fuego</b> , SEdeTdelf, 20¢ rd	OB59.99NB
<b>Tierra del Fuego</b> , SEdeTdelf, 20¢ blk	OB59.99NB
<b>Tierra del Fuego</b> , Spring Hill 50¢	OB59.99NB

OB = Opening Bid NB = No Bid RL = relist

RNM = Reserve Not Met R = Reserve

BIN = Buy it now

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# USHUAIA, CONT.

ers of paper covering this flap, indicating that the box was used many times to collect funds for the Society.

The second order of business was to deliver a metal detector to an email friend, David Guevara. David has the neatest website on the history of Tierra del Fuego, with a lot of information on Julius Popper, a Romanian mining entrepreneur that issued his own coinage. (<http://historiatdf.netcombbs.com.ar>).

David had advised the museum that I had the box. I had emailed photos, and David had told me that the museum was very interested. But capitalist collector pig that I am, I was not just going to give it to them. As noted in the June, 2003 issue of ATC&PN, the museum had made two reproductions of Popper's gold coins. I have the second series, and I wanted a specimen of the first.

I arrived at the museum before David, and not being able to resist "show and tell" I took the box from its protective box. The lady at the reception desk looked at it with intense interest, and then invited me back to the director's office where I met Sr. Santiago Reyes.

With introductions out of the way, Sr. Reyes examined the box. His interest was obvious. Through one of the staff, I explained what I wanted - the first series reproduction. Through gestures and translation, he said that he did not have one, but offered the second series reproduction. I explained that I already had that, and would only trade the box for a first series token. I must say that at this point he looked very disappointed that he would not be able to acquire the box for the museum.

In the meantime, David Guevara and his wife Delia Velazquez arrived, and I met a man that I had known only via emails for a couple years! He had seen the photos, but was now seeing the box for the first time also.

Much to the Sr. Reyes' relief, I explained, through the translator, that it was not important that I leave that day with the token. It was not important if I received the token the next day, next week or next year. I believed that he was an honorable man, and would do his best to acquire this token

for me. I then spent the next 15 minutes giving information to the staff as they entered data on the computer to document the acquisition. The director presented me with the medal shown on this page, and we all went outside for a photo in front of the museum.

Formalities completed, I went back inside to look at the museum's exhibits. Of the highest interest was the display of Popper memorabilia, including dies used to strike his Un Gramo and 5 Gramos gold coins (or tokens) - photo right.



Delia Velazquez, David Guevara, Santiago Reyes, Jan Hanscom, Dick Hanscom





## USHUAIA, CONT.

When I was finished viewing the museum, we drove back to our hostel with David and Delia. David had ordered a White's GMT metal detector to use in his gold mining activities. When he saw the detector, a big, childlike grin came to his face. I have no doubt that he will put it to good use, and I made him promise that when he found gold with it, he would send me a photo of him, the detector and the gold so that I could send it to White's for their magazine.

We sat and talked for about an hour. I speak no Spanish, and David speaks no English. But it is amazing how we made ourselves understood. After about an hour, a translator arrived that David had requested, and we went back over what we had already discussed, now with a certainty that we understood, and then progressed to more complex subjects that could not be covered with gestures and the odd word that could be recognized. For example, it is really hard to explain how cold it gets in Fairbanks with hand gestures!

David gave me a gift that could not have been more appropriate. I am just glad that I did not have to explain it to customs coming back into the U.S. Their reaction would have been, "Yeah, right! Strip search!" It is a bag with the label "Arenas Auríferas, El Paramo, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina" - black, gold-bearing sand from El Paramo, Popper's primary mine!



David's and Delia's stay in Ushuaia was short. They had to return home to Rio Grande, near the site of Popper's gold discoveries, and the road conditions were less than perfect. We parted company with best wishes, and an invitation to Alaska. David was concerned about not speaking English. We told him there are enough people that speak Spanish in Alaska, and even without that, we could make it work.

The next day, I went in search of the two casinos that are supposed to be in Ushuaia. I found them on the

internet, and thought this would be the best place to pick up a numismatic souvenir.

We had walked the main street a couple of times already before I went on this search. But this time I was armed with street addresses. We found the first, "Magnum," closed. So, we went in search of Casino Club. Right on San Martin, the main street, it is just an unmarked entrance at street level. But if you look up, the Casino Club sign can be seen for some distance.



While the staff at Casino Club was polite, I was unable to take any photos inside the casino (even with no patrons present). I lined up a great shot of the roulette table, chips stacked, no players around, and was denied permission to take a photo. I feel that this was one of the few times on our trip that not being able to speak Spanish was a handicap.

Casino Club has other casinos in southern Argentina and I was told to contact the marketing manager in Comodoro Rivadavia for permission to take photos. This was, or course, not possible during our short stay.

The on-duty manager was kind enough to present me with 10, 25 and 50 centavos and 1 Peso tokens used in the slot machines, but I was told it was not allowed to take any chips from the casino. Unfortunately, I do not gamble and I am not familiar with the games. Otherwise, I could have purchased chips, played a few games, and left with whatever chips I had left.

However, after begging and pleading ("I came all the way from Alaska..."), I was allowed to purchase one chip, a 5 Pesos chip.

Chips in use were valued at 2 Pesos to 5,000 Pesos, and dollar value chips from \$1 to \$5,000. I believe that these are similar to chips used in other "Casino Clubs" in southern Argentina, not unique to the Casino Club in Ushuaia.

One final item that the duty manager gave me was a token from "Casino Status," another casino that had

# USHUAIA, CONT.



closed. I had not heard of this casino, but the last morning while walking San Martin, by pure chance, I saw the door to the casino. This is really the neatest token of the batch, with water in the foreground, mountains in the background, and the sun behind them, not unlike Ushuaia.

nas, Chile, the wind was howling. We decided to walk to the airport, about a mile from our hostel. The wind was really gusting, and we had to lean to our right to keep from getting blown over. We took a more direct route rather than follow the road, across a rocky beach and then up a berm which I was promptly blown off. Fortunately, no damage done.

We had flown from Punta Arenas to Ushuaia in a 10 seat aircraft. I could not believe that plane was going to fly in this wind. Our flight was late, but fortunately, it was a somewhat larger plane, about a 30 seater (maybe a Dash-7?). The pilot taxied to the runway, and I can see the end is not far off. He turned left, away from the near end and taxied maybe 100 yard, and turned into the wind. I'm thinking, "I know he is taking off into the wind, but I really would like a little bit more runway." The wind was blowing so hard, he was in the air in less than 100 yards. The flight was a bit bumpy, but nothing to be overly concerned about. The views on short flight back to Punta Arenas were spectacular (not unlike Alaska), and made me wish we had more time to spend in Tierra del Fuego.

Getting around in Ushuaia without a rental car was quite easy. We walked into town, about a mile or so, and then caught the "Cooperativa de Transporte," small buses that brought us back to our hostel. A real bargain at one peso. The reason we walked into town is that we never figured out where to catch the bus going back into town. They did not retrace the outbound route, obviously making some kind of loop.

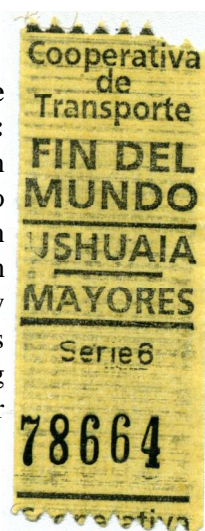
When it was time to catch our flight back to Punta Are-

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**CASINO CLUB:** Set of 4 tokens, undenominated, used in slot machines: 1 Peso 30mm, 50 Centavos 24mm, 25 Centavos 23mm and 10 Centavos 21.5mm. All appear to be a copper nickel alloy, although the 50 Centavos appears to be plated.

**Cooperativa de Transporte:** Received when paying a 1 Peso fare. Black on yellow, very thin paper, 67mm by 25mm. Lengths vary depending on how the driver tears it off!



**CASINO CLUB:** "E8" chip, valued at 5 Pesos. Red with a silver bar, Casino Club in black, "E8" in gold.



**CASINO STATUS:** Gaming token - Ficha de Juego, 1 Token. Pale brass, 24mm.



# MAGALLANES Y ANTARCIA CHILENA

The items on this page were gifts from Sr. Norberto Traub of Santiago. While these are much appreciated, his greatest gift was his friendship.

The item to the right is much reduced. Its diameter is over 200mm! It is pressed on thin bronze, from negative and positive dies. The positive die pushes the metal up into the negative die, assisting in the formation of the design that we see.

Magallanes y Antartica Chilena make up Chile's XII Region. This includes the southernmost part of Chile including Punta Arenas, the Chilean part of Tierra del Fuego, and Chile's claims on the Antarctic continent (as shown on the pie shaped wedge on the plaque). The central figure is Magellan standing on a cannon facing west.



**UNIVERSIDAD DE MAGALLANES:** Located in Punta Arenas, the motto below Magellan reads "Scientiae in Austro". This silver colored uniface medal is enameled white, light blue and dark blue. Diameter is 59mm.

Finally, a commemorative cover for the 50th anniversary of the rescue of Shackleton's crew by the Chilean vessel *Yelcho*, captained by Piloto Luis A. Pardo. There is a story here that we will bring to you in a future issue of ATC&PN.



# MORE TIERRA DEL FUEGO!

I have been stockpiling items from Tierra del Fuego to use in an issue such as this.



**SPRING HILL:** Tierra del Fuego Sheep Farming Co. Ltd., Vale 50¢ en Mercaderías. Black vulcanite, 32mm. From the Chile portion of Tierra del Fuego. Company absorbed by Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego. First brought to our attention a couple of years ago. Based upon eBay appearances, about four currently known.



**PATAGONIA:** Patagonian Sheep Farming Co. Ltd., 3<sup>d</sup>. Uniface brass, 33mm. The 3<sup>d</sup> is stamped into the token, so other denominations may exist. Patagonian Sheep Farming Co. Ltd. had estancias north of the Strait of Magellan, and probably on the south side also. More research is being done.



**(USHUAIA):** Casino Club, "E7" (2 Pesos). Purple with a pink bar, black and gold lettering (eBay).

**RIO GRANDE-USHUAIA:** Vale: Por Un Pasaje (Good for one passage). Dated 1964, it looks like it

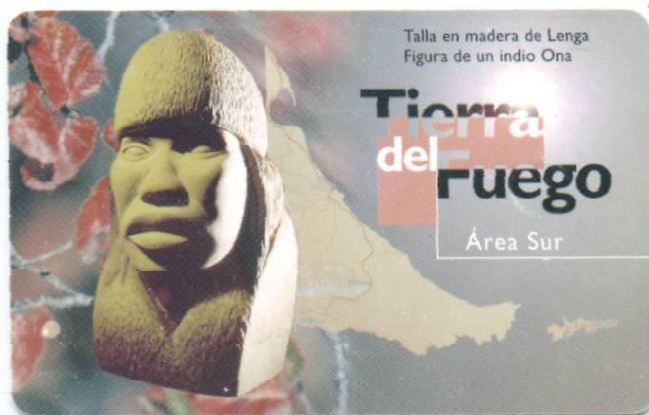


cost 300 Pesos to go from Rio Grande to Ushuaia. Orange bus and border, black printing. Illustration reduced, actual size 156 x 72mm.

It is interesting that the term "Vale" is used (as on the Spring Hill token). In her book, "Tierra del Fuego," Rae Natalie Prosser Goodall" states that:

"On the south side of Tierra del Fuego, Argentine money has always been used, although pound sterling, Chilean pesos and pure gold were also in circulation at various times. But on the north side of the island the naval ships arrived many years later. All contact was with Punta Arenas by ship or by crossing the Island to Porvenir. Chilean money or pounds sterling were used until 1925. The Freezer paid in *vales* (promissory notes) until about 1934."

The refrigeration plant is one of the stops noted on the "vale!"



**ARGENTINA:** Telefónica de Argentina. Phone card with Tierra del Fuego motif. The back states that the carving is in Museo del Fin del Mundo (oops, I missed it), and it is 20 Fichas. On our trip, I asked for "fichas de Tierra del Fuego" (tokens). Here, it probably means units of time.

**NUMBERING ERROR:** Front page is 6, second page (50) is 7; third page (unnumbered) is 8.